BROADCASTER

Child Abuse Prevention Remains High-Priority for LPPD



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In 1983, April was proclaimed the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Since then, child abuse and neglect awareness activities have been promoted across the country during April of each year. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCAN) within the Children's Bureau coordinates Child Abuse Prevention Month, providing information and releasing updated national statistics about child abuse and neglect each April. Locally, the Houston-based Children's Assessment Center (CAC) treats nearly 5,000 sexually abused children every year alone, many of whom either live in or visit the La Porte area. While such reprehensible acts are unlikely to be completely eradicated, La Porte Police would like to take a moment to inform community members about ways you can help.

LPPD currently has investigators assigned to both the CAC as well the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) unit in order to help combat such incidents. Still, the Department stresses that educating parents, educators, and community members remains the primary means of detecting and preventing child abuse. The CAC's message is that all children have adults in their lives, and it is each person's responsibility to watch out for our children. Unfortunately, adults may miss the signs of abuse. According to the CAC, the top 10 signs victimized children display are:

- 1. Changes in behavior
- 2. Returning to earlier stages of behavior.
- 3. Fear of going home
- 4. Changes in eating.
- 5. Changes in sleeping
- 6. Changes in school performance and attendance.
- 7. Lack of personal care or hygiene.
- 8. Risk-taking behaviors.
- 9. Inappropriate sexual behaviors or language.
- 10. Unexplained injuries, bruises, or other marks.

La Porte investigators, working with the CAC and ICAC will continue to fight for our children. However, to be truly effective, the community's help is needed. The message is simple: If you see signs of abuse, or suspect a child is being abused, call the police. For more information on child abuse, visit the CAC's website at http://cachouston.org/. Or, if you have any information to report to La Porte Police regarding abuse, please contact the Criminal Investigative Division at 281-842-3173.